

The Honorable Toni N. Harp
State Senator
Legislative Office Building, Rm. 2700
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Dear Senator Harp:

I respectfully request that you restore funding to the state budget for Connecticut's centers for independent living. I am Vice President of the Board of Directors for Independence Unlimited, the center for independent living that serves the Greater Hartford area. I am also an ex officio member of the State Independent Living Council.

I first learned about the state's centers for independent living in 2000, when I was staff to a legislatively mandated commission that made recommendations about services and supports for persons with developmental disabilities, more specifically autism spectrum disorders. I have also observed the work of center staff as I have served on the Nursing Facilities Transition Grant Steering Committee and continue to serve on The Money Follows the Person Steering, which oversees interagency efforts to ensure that Connecticut's citizens with disabilities living in the nursing facilities have choice about moving back to the community and the support to do so.

Connecticut's centers for independent living provide unique information and referral services to persons of all ages with all types of disabilities. To the best of my knowledge, these critically important supports are unduplicated by any other entity in the state. Of note is the fact that many of the individuals that work in the centers have disabilities themselves. As such, they are able to serve as role models and peer mentors for others.

Finally, Connecticut's centers for independent living serve as a single point of entry into disability services for persons transitioning from nursing facilities. Eliminating state funding for the centers will undoubtedly have significant, systemic affects on the cost savings being accrued through Money Follows the Person. The loss of state funds will directly affect program information and referral supports for hundreds of individuals with disabilities across the state.

Thank for your service to the state and for taking the time to consider this request. If I can provide you with additional information or if you would like to speak with me please contact me at dlarocco@hartford.edu.

Sincerely yours,

Diana J. LaRocco, Ed.D.
Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership
Director, Center for Public Health and Education Policy
dlarocco@hartford.edu